

Elegant Apothegms

In the SPEECH of

Lewis IV. King of France

To His Revolted SUBJECTS.

BEfore I shall receive your Oath of Fidelity, (which I may justly demand, and You may justly take,) I let you know, you have re-call'd this Prince, who (during his Exile) had nothing else to do, but to Rule and Reign; And hereby I shall enforce you to believe, that You shall not make a Royal Throne a Passage into my Fathers Prison; and after you have presented me with a Crown, to dare once to think of Chains and Irons. I know well, that this Discourse will surprise You, and that You did not believe when you presented me with a Scepter, that I should not rather have receiv'd it with Thanks, than Reprehensions; But this Act is extraordinary in its Commencement, Progress, and Constitution; And it's Just that all Circumstances should be proportionable. Let it then suffice you, only to know, that if they be Ignorant in that Point, Subjects are to pay their Obedience, yet I am not ignorant to what degree Sovereigns may extend their Clemency, notwithstanding there is difference betwixt them: Subjects have no limits for the first, but Sovereigns have for the latter. The People are oblig'd to the Princes Will, both by their Birth and Laws; They owe them their Goods, their Lives and Liberties: Their Prince owes them nothing but *Justice*, which can hardly Pardon *Traitors*. If these Truths and Maxims had been equally understood, and follow'd by the late King my Sovereign, and You his People, Affairs had not been in so sad a condition, the State had not been reduc'd to such Confusion, the Provinces had not been Canoniz'd, *Germany* had not been so full of Faction, *Italy* had not been so divided; all the Cities of the Kingdom had not had so many Kings as they had new Governours, You had not been guilty of the Crime of *Treason*, in elevating an *Usurper* to the *Throne*; his Tomb might have been bedeck'd with my Tears, his Hearse cover'd with Trophies, and not with Chains; And (in short) You might have been Happy and Innocent: But as His Clemency, and Your Rebellion, were the sole Cause of all those Evils, so Your Obedience, and my Justice, are the only Means to make Reparation. Consider a little, (I pray you,) that You fall not back into the same Estate wherein you were; You have violated all sort of Rights in the Person of your King, You have rais'd a War against Him, Assaulted him, and afterwards Poison'd him; You have abus'd the Confidence he had in You, and deliver'd him Prisoner, with as great *Treason* as *Injustice*, *Insolency* as *Cruelty*; *Insolency* which was never offer'd to the Person of an ordinary Herald.

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Thus you have impudently abus'd your KING during a Treaty of Peace, led him from Prison to Prison for Five Years together: You have forc'd him to despise his *Crown*, and transfer'd it to another Hands than mine: To conclude, You have put Him to Death, and you have reduc'd Me to a strict Necessity to shew my Misery beyond Sea, and seek my Safety by my Flight. It hath happen'd, that sometimes Grandees of a Kingdom have Interpos'd Themselves against a Tyranny, and destroy'd it; But it was never seen, that They Themselves advanc'd a Tyrant to the Throne as You have done. In these kind of Crimes, the Abetter may be said to be more Criminal, than He who receiv'd all the Fruit; For if every one of You had aspir'd to set the Crown upon his own Head, You had been more excusable, than to snatch it from your Lawful Prince, and place it upon the Head of a *Usurper*. But You may say to Me, the Prince that bore it, was not able to support it: To that I shall Answer, as I had the Honour to be his Son, and Subject, it belongs not to Me to determine what He could, or what He could not; Seeing He was my Father, I ought not to presume to be His Judge, and He my King; I ought not to be so Impudent to Censure, much less Condemn His Actions, He being not oblig'd to give an account to any, but God alone: The same Respect I have for his Memory, You ought to have for his Person, He was Your King as well as Mine. Seeing then that **KINGS** are call'd *Fathers of the People*, their Subjects are oblig'd to have for Them a True Resentment of Respect which their very Birth may infuse into them: Besides, Sovereigns are the true Images of God, that splendour of their Puissance, is a Beam of their Power; when you see the Comets appear, the Sun Eclips'd, the Thunder-bolts fall on Innocent Heads, we see the Floods drown whole Towns by their Innundations, the Sea passing its Bounds, swallowing whole Provinces in the bottom of the Deep, devour them up; Yea, when you see Earth-quakes make Kingdoms Tremble, Then it is permitted to the People to Murmur; Do you not discern the contrary in these occurrences, they redouble their Vows and Prayers, and that they are never more obedient to God, than at such a time, as if God had forsaken the Providence of the Universe. And when it shall so happen, that Heaven gives you a Prince, (for punishment of your Sins,) under whose Reign, Policy and Prudence are not well observ'd, during whose Government Foreign and Civil Wars, devour all with cruel ravages, it belongs not then to You to Condemn your Sovereign; For is he Feeble? then you ought to sustain him; Is He Unfortunate? then you ought to bemoan him; Is he Wicked? then you ought to look upon him as a Scourge sent from Heaven, and to wait with Patience for a Remedy from that Hand which hath caused your Evil: For when a Prince Commands his Army, and gives Battle, if it so happens that the Soldiers perform not their Duty, that the Squadron yield, the main Body be broken; and in the end, after he hath done Miracles in his Person, He be yet constrain'd to Retreat from his Enemies, is it not the Prince that suffers the Disgrace, and is reputed Vanquish'd, and bears the Infamy of the Day? notwithstanding by his own particular Actions he hath merited to be a Conquerour? Seeing it thus, why will ye not bear with the Misfortunes of your Prince, as well as They do with Yours? Or to come something nearer to the quick; why do you not regulate these Disorders by your more exact Obedience? The Prince alone is obvious in a Battle to the Infamy, Cowardise, Misfortunes of his whole Army, and You are Thousands who are oblig'd to strengthen the Authority of your King. Believe me, if all Subjects would be Loyal, no Kingdom could be Miserable; And if all Princes thought on Severity more than Clemencie, there would not be so many Subjects Rebels: Moreover, if it were permitted to the capritious People, to take, and give Crowns when they fancied a Change, I conceive there is not a Shepherd but he might hope to be a King, and not a King but reduc'd to a Shepherd, so unruly are floating Judgments. But to speak the truth to you, these things ought not to pass, We are Your Masters, and You ought not

to become Ours. It is not that I am ignorant, that God disposes of Crowns and Scepters as he pleases, and gives them to whom he lists. I tell you in general, that Kings ought not to lose their Crowns, but with their Lives, and that nothing can Dispense Subjects from the Loyalty they owe to their Sovereigns, not any pretence to Authorize a Rebellion. If Sacred Persons may not enjoy their particular Priviledges, they shall be expos'd to more miseries than all sorts of Men; their very Guards will appear to them as so many Enemies; their Thrones a Direful Precipice, rather than a place of Honour. A King of this kind, is no better than an illustrious Slave, when he shall have as many Masters as Subjects. This Disorder will quickly cause a Second; For when the Nobility of a Kingdom fail in their Duty to their Prince, Vassals and Tenants will forfeit their Fealty to Them, and then Rebellion is communicated from the Grandees to the Commons, and so descending from one sort to another, till Universal Confusion devours all; Every one will Command, and no person Obey, and so every one proves a Slave to his own Ambition; This in effect is the most sad condition a Kingdom can fall into. For my own part, when I consider my self to be the Son of a King, Successor of so many Kings, and yet notwithstanding that, I immediately succeed not my Father; This *Idea* imprints in Me a strange Confusion as towards You, and extreme Grief as towards my self, when I reflect how the same Subjects, who Inchain'd CHARLES in Fetters, plac'd LEWIS on the Throne; The Malice which they bore to the Father, may it not easily fall upon the Son? And may not They fear that the Son will Revenge the Outrages against the Father? Yet (some may say,) present Loyalty will blot out the Memory of their Antient Dis-service. This is certain, in the exact Rule, no Noble Action ought to pass without its Recompence: Yet it's as really true, that no Crime ought to escape its Punishment. You have call'd Me to the Throne, it's true, but if you had not, You had been as Criminal against *Lewis* as *Charles*; Your Wives and Children are not exempt from these Crimes, seeing (without doubt) they made Vows for their Parents offending, and Prayers against their Prince. Whereas then I cannot punish you all, but that I must entertain you, It rests at my choice, whether I would become a King without Subjects, or to Pardon You out of pure Grace. It may be, during your Lives ye may Repent you of your Antient Crimes, and become as Faithful as you were Disobedient; Think not then, that by taking an Oath of Fidelity, that I am thereby engag'd not to do what becomes a King; No, I come to a Throne, where, if I should be a Slave, I had rather be obscur'd in a Prison as my Father was, than not to Reign as a Sovereign. Those People with whom Loyalty is Elective, forbear not to make their Kings Absolute, because they could have no pretence of Justice to do otherwise. Judge then, if those who hold their Crowns from Heaven, ought to acknowledge their Subjects for their Masters. I find it far better to be a Glorious Subject, than a King disobey'd. Deceive not your selves, the Value and Providence of a Prince are not sufficient of themselves to make a Kingdom happy; The Subjects ought to contribute their proportions, the Nobles to offer their Loyal Obedience, the People to follow their good Example. See what your Prince hath said to You, in Lieu of Punishing, hath Pardon'd; Instead of Fighting with You, prepares to Defend You; Instead of Your Enemy, is Your Conservator.